

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 HONG K 04987 210020Z  
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-20  
ACDA-12 OMB-01 HA-05 MCT-01 /108 W  
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R 200741Z APR 78  
FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 05  
INFO AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM  
CDR IPAC HONOLULU HI  
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK  
COMUSTDC  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE  
USLO PEKING  
CINCPAC  
DIA WASHDC

UNCLAS HONG KONG 4987

E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: MOPS VM CH  
SU43:5: REPORT OF FIGHTING ON VIETNAM-PRC BORDER

REF: STATE 99382

1. ON APRIL 20 LOCAL HONG KONG NEWSPAPER, SOUTH CHINA  
MORNING POST, CARRIED THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE ON ALLEGED FIGHT-  
ING ON THE VIETNAMESE-PRC BORDER.

2. BEGIN TEXT: FIGHTING HAS BROKEN OUT BETWEEN CHINESE AND  
VIETNAMESE FORCES ALONG THE WHOLE LENGTH OF THE FRONTIER BET-  
WEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, THE SWEDISH BROADCASTING CORPN REPORTED  
YESTERDAY, QUOTING INFORMED "FOREIGN SOURCES" IN HANOI.

THE RADIO'S HONG KONG CORRESPONDENT, RULF SODERBERJ, SAID  
THAT THE INCIDENTS INVOLVED FULL-SCALE FIGHTING AND WERE NOT  
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JUST BORDER CLASHES.

THEY INCLUDED AT LEAST ONE BATTLE FOUGHT WITH TANKS AND  
OTHER HEAVY ARMOUR.

MR. SODERBERJ, WHO RETURNED TO HONG KONG FROM HANOI  
ON TUESDAY AFTER ACCOMPANYING A DELEGATION LED BY THE  
SWEDISH FOREIGN MINISTER, MRS. KARIN SODER, SAID THE BORDER  
INCIDENTS MIGHT STILL BE GOING ON. HIS REASONING WAS THAT

NO TRAVELLER HAS BEEN ALLOWED ACCESS TO THE BORDER AREAS.

FOR INSTANCE, HE SAID, THERE WERE SOME SWEDISH TECHNICIANS HELPING THE VIETNAMESE BUILD A PAPER MILL NORTH OF HANOI.

"THEY USED TO BE ALLOWED TO GO NEAR THE BORDER," MR. SODERBERJ SAID, "BUT NOT ANY MORE."

THE CORRESPONDENT SAID HE LEARNED OF THE CLASHES FROM TWO FOREIGN SOURCES IN HANOI, STRESSING THAT THEY WERE NOT SWEDISH.

NEITHER VIETNAM NOR CHINA HAS MADE ANY REFERENCE TO THE CLASHES; NOR HAS THE REPORT BEEN CORROBORATED BY OTHER SOURCES.

MR. SODERBERJ SAID HIS SOURCES COULD NOT PINPOINT THE REASONS FOR THE CLASHES BUT HE SPECULATED THAT THEY COULD BE CONNECTED WITH THE CAMBODIAN/VIETNAM WAR.

MUTUAL TERRITORIAL CLAIMS BETWEEN CHINA AND VIETNAM COULD BE ANOTHER REASON, ACCORDING TO INFORMATION MR. SODERBERJ OBTAINED IN HANOI.

IN AN INFORMAL DISCUSSION, SOME VIETNAMESE OFFICIALS DENIED THERE HAD BEEN BORDER CLASHES BUT SAID:

"WE HAVE CLAIMS ON THEIR (CHINESE) TERRITORY. THEY HAVE CLAIMS ON OUR TERRITORY.

"IT'S NOT JUST THE ISLANDS (THE PARACELS AND SPRATLYS OVER WHICH BOTH CHINA AND VIETNAM CLAIM SOVEREIGNTY) BUT ALSO ALONG THE LAND BORDER."

THIS IS NOT THE FIRST TIME THAT CLASHES BETWEEN CHINA UNCLASSIFIED

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AND VIETNAM HAVE BEEN REPORTED. VIETNAMESE FORCES, FRESH FROM VICTORY IN SAIGON, TWO AND A HALF YEARS AGO REPORTEDLY PROBED CHINESE DEFENCE LINES ALONG THE BORDER WITH CHINA'S YUNNAN AND KWANGSI PROVINCES, BUT WERE REPULSED.

IN FEBRUARY, WHEN VIETNAM LAUNCHED A FULL-SCALE ASSAULT ON CAMBODIA, FRESH CLASHES BROKE OUT ALONG THE VIETNAM-CHINA BORDER, ACCORDING TO INFORMED SOURCES.

THESE CLASHES WERE INCONCLUSIVE BUT IT WAS NOTED THEN THAT VIETNAM HAD FOR SOME REASON CHECKED ITS ADVANCE INTO CAMBODIA.

THE VIETNAMESE DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER, MR. PHAN HIEN, A SPECIALIST ON BORDER ISSUES, IS REPORTEDLY STILL IN PEKING, OR STAYED THERE RECENTLY, TO DISCUSS BORDER PROBLEMS BETWEEN CHINA AND VIETNAM, PEKING DIPLOMATIC SOURCES SAID.

NO OFFICIAL CONFIRMATION OF THIS VISIT COULD BE OBTAINED FROM VIETNAMESE OR CHINESE SOURCES.

ONE DIPLOMAT SAID MR. PHAN HIEN ARRIVED IN PEKING ON MARCH 22 ACCOMPANIED BY THE CHINESE AMBASSADOR IN HANOI TO CONSULT WITH CHINESE OFFICIALS.

THERE IS NO INDICATION MR. HIEN HAS RETURNED TO HANOI.

IN PNOMPENH, MEANWHILE, THE CHINESE AMBASSADOR, SPEAKING ON BEHALF OF HIS COLLEAGUES AS DOYEN OF THE DIPLOMATIC

CORPS, YESTERDAY CONGRATULATED "ALL THE PEOPLE OF CAMBODIA  
AND THE REVOLUTIONARY TROOPS WHO ARE WINNING A GREAT VICTORY  
OVER THE AGGRESSORS OF A SMALL COUNTRY."

THE ENVOY WAS SPEAKING AT A RECEPTION GIVEN BY THE  
CAMBODIAN VICE PREMIER IN CHARGE OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
MR. IENG SARY, MARKING DEMOCRATIC CAMBODIA'S THIRD ANNI-  
VERSA

Y.

HE REFRAINED FROM NAMING VIETNAM AS THE "AGGRESSORS,"  
ACCORDING TO AGENCY REPORTS. END TEXT.

3. THIS MESSAGE AND HONG KONG 4933 COORDINATED WITH HKDLO.  
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## Message Attributes

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**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
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**Draft Date:** 20 apr 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Disposition Comment:**  
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**Disposition History:** n/a  
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**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** n/a  
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**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014